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Standby Generator Plan Saves County \$1,600/Mo. in Elec. Costs

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By FRANK BRYANT

LITHIA, Fla. - Hillsborough County's Lithia pumping station here expects first-year electricity bill savings of \$20,000 from its participation in Tampa Electric Co.'s year-old Standby Generator Program that pays users to switch to self-generated power during peak demand periods.

Under the program, the station's monthly demand charge is reduced in exchange for a promise to meet its entire load with its own standby generators in the event the utility needs extra capacity to meet peak demand. Bill Bierce, electrical technician at the station, said the station's load averages 600-1,000 kilowatts (kw) and peaks at 2,000 kw. If asked to curtail its load, the station utilizes one or both of its 900 kw diesel-powered Electric Power Gen Sets by Caterpillar Inc., Peoria, Ill., he told EUN.

While the station's electric bills range from \$16,000 to \$50,000 per month, it has saved \$1,600-\$2,000 monthly since joining the Standby Generator Program in May, Bierce said. The savings appear on utility bills as a credit of \$2 per kw per month, plus 25 cents per kw and 10 cents per kilowatt hour (kwh) generated at the utility's request.

Bierce reported no significant increase in the station's No. 2 fuel oil bills since it began participating in the program, in part because the generators were run frequently anyway to comply with a state law requiring that the generators be run four hours per month. The generators are run during the area's frequent thunderstorms, he said, and to satisfy the demands of low power factor variable frequency drives in order to avoid utility power factor penalties.

Since joining the Tampa Electric program, the station has averaged six hours of run time per month, according to Bierce, who added that the cost of generating electricity is covered by the utility's credits.

"The program is basically no cost to us," he said. "Tampa Electric supplied the monitoring equipment and we'd be running the generator anyway."

The "no cost" feature is a strong drawing card for end users, according to Harold Schultz, senior conservation specialist at Tampa Electric. Because the program is only open to commercial and industrial customers who already own backup generators but aren't on interruptible rates, he said, there is no up-front cost to sign on. The monitors and annunciator that the program requires are provided at no charge by the utility, he added.

Schulz said participants are reimbursed through monthly credits, rather than rebates, in order to avoid the federal income tax imposed on rebate payments.

Under terms of the program, Tampa Electric can ask participants to shed their entire load on an hour's notice during peak periods, which are weekdays from 2:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. April through October, and 6:00 A.M.

to 11:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. the rest of the year. The utility has no weekend or midpeak periods. Participants have averaged four hours per month of run time, the state requirement, he noted.

Schultz observed that Tampa Electric initiated the program as part of a load leveling strategy. Last winter the utility hit a peak of 2,900 megawatts (Mw), compared to total system capacity of 3,300 Mw, he said. By signing 19 customers to the Standby Generator Program last year, the utility cut 7 Mw from its peak, he said.

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